

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5883
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0623

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, IZ, LE
SUBJECT: IRAQI POLICY TOWARD LEBANON

REF: BAGHDAD 576 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IRAQI GOVERNMENT AND BAATH PARTY HAVE
PLEDGED FULL SUPPORT TO PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH LEBANON,
BUT REGIME HAS BEEN UNABLE OR UNPREPARED TO GO BEYOND
PROPAGANDA AND STERILE DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERING. SYRIA AND
U.S. BEAR BRUNT OF CRITICISM. END SUMMARY.

2. EVENTS IN LEBANON HAVE DOMINATED BAGHDAD MEDIA
DURING PAST WEEK. PRESS HAS PICKED UP ANTI-AMERICAN
LINE ENUNCIATED BY MINISTER OF INFORMATION (REFTEL) AND IS
ALSO PROVIDING PUBLIC WITH EXAGGERATED ACCOUNTS OF PALESTINIAN
MILITARY FEATS AGAINST ISRAELI SUPERIORITY IN NUMBERS
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AND WEAPONRY. PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS ATTENDED WELL
ORGANIZED MASS RALLY WHERE THEY PLEDGED FULL SUPPORT TO
PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON.

3. STATEMENT OF BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND ON
MARCH 17 CLAIMED ISRAELI INTENT TO OCCUPY SOUTHERN
LEBANON PERMANENTLY. ONE BAGHDAD DAILY PORTRAYED

PRESIDENT CARTER AS SUPPORTING ALLEGED ISRAELI AISM CONSISTENT WITH HIS ANCESTRY, "A PRODUCT OF SETTLERS WHO RESORTED TO THE PHYSICAL EXTERMINATION OF INDIGENOUS RED INDIANS." BY MARCH 20, IRAQ NEWS AGENCY HAD SHIFTED GROUND TO CLAIM THAT USG-SPONSORED UNSC RESOLUTION "AIMED AT GIVING ZIONIST ENTITY TIME AND MEANS TO PUSH THROUGH POLICY OF AGGRESSION DESIGNED TO LIQUIDATE THE ARAB PEOPLE OF APLESTINE."

4. BAATH PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COMMAND OF SYRIA, AN IRAQI FRONT, LED ATTACKS ON SYRIAN GOVERNMENT'S INACTION WITH CALL TO SYRIAN MASSES TO RESCUE HONOR OF ARAB NATION BY GOING TO WAR OVER "DEBRIS OF DAMASCUS REGIME." PRESS HAS REPORTED SERIES OF FOREIGN MINISTRY MEETINGS WITH SYRIAN AMBASSADOR AND HAS CLAIMED THAT DAMASCUS REFUSED TO OPEN BORDER TO TRANSIT OF IRAQI MEN AND MATERIALS ACROSS SYRIAN TERRITORY. ARAB AMBASSADORS I HAVE SPOKEN TO ARE UNIFORMLY SKEPTICAL OF BAGHDAD'S PROCLAIMED READINESS TO SEND REIMFORCEMENTS TO LEBANON. THERE IS GENERAL ADMIRATION FOR SYRIAN SKILL IN AVOIDING CLASH WITH ISRAELIS DESPITE OBVIOUS IRAQI EFFORT TO PROMOTE IT.

5. FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS STRUCK HIGH PROFILE BUT WITH APPARENT LACK OF CLEAR POLICY DIRECTION. FOREIGN MINISTRY FIRST URGED ARAB AMBASSADORS AND SELECTED
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REPRESENTATIVES OF UNSC-MEMBER STATES TO SEEK URGENT UNSC MEETING TO OBTAIN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. LEBANESE AMBASSADOR, IN PRESENCE OF HIS ARAB COLLEAGUES, PROTESTED POSITION TAKEN BY IRAQ WITHOUT CONSULTING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. ONCE UNSC WAS IN SESSION, MFA SWITCHED TO URGING OPPOSITION TO USG-SPONSORED RESOLUTION. CONCURRENTLY, IRAQ WAS MAKING PUBLIC PLEASE TO OAU, NONALIGNED MOVEMENT, ISLAMIC STATES AND SYG WALDHEIM.

6. COMMENT: OVERALL PICTURE IS ONE OF FRANTIC ACTIVITY TO COVER EMPTINESS OF IRAQI SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS. THERE IS UNDERTONE OF BEWILDERED CONVICTION THAT ISRAEL, SYRIA, AND USG HAVE COLLUDED TO GET THEIR WAY ONCE AGAIN. IRAQIS MAY TAKE SOME SATISFACTION FROM SOVIET AND CZECH ABSTENTION IN UNSC VOTING, BUT THEIR ISOLATION IN ARAB WORLD CONTINUES TO MOCK PRETENSIONS TO PAN-ARAB LEADERSHIP. IRAQIS MAY SEEK WAYS TO SUPPORT REJECTIONIST PALESTINIANS TO WHOM THEY MAINTAIN LINKS, BUT THE IRAQI PUBLIC SHOWS LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR ADVENTURISM.
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